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**THE SENATE
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Exclusive to the Observer and Eccentric Newspapers

July 11, 2006

Op-Ed: Summer Safety

Sen. Laura M. Toy
6th District

There is no better place to enjoy summer than in Michigan! From Houghton Lake to Mackinac Island, Sleeping Bear Dunes to the Upper Peninsula, families know our state's beautiful lakes, woods and other natural wonders are the perfect destination for summer fun.

Yet a season filled with outdoor adventures, picnics, pools, fireworks and bikes can also mean trips to the emergency room. In fact, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, summer is the time of year consumers are most likely to be injured.

Help your family have fun in the sun by always keeping safety in mind. Remember these tips to protect your family this summer:

- Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold. Food left out too long can cause bacterial growth. Perishable foods should not be out of the refrigerator for more than two hours.
- When boating, make sure everyone wears their life jacket. More than 80 percent of the boating fatality victims who drowned in 2004 were not wearing a life jacket.
- Never leave a child, or pet in an unattended car, even with the windows down. A vehicle can heat up to dangerous levels in a matter of minutes.
- Wear a properly fitted helmet when biking, skateboarding or skating. Bike helmets can reduce the risk of brain injury by 88 percent.
- Never leave children alone in or near the water. Always make sure children are supervised by an attentive adult.
- On hot days, keep hydrated by drinking plenty of water, even when you're not thirsty. Children and seniors are especially vulnerable to heat-related illness.

Even with the best planning, accidents can and do happen. For minor mishaps, keep a fully-equipped first aid kit handy in your home and car. More serious accidents or emergencies require prompt medical attention.

You can find more safety tips from the National Safety Council at www.nsc.org/library/facts.htm or the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org. To receive an information sheet with helpful safety toll-free numbers and websites, or a *Child Safety* coloring book, contact my office at 517-373-1707 or by e-mail at senltoy@senate.michigan.gov.